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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5843  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0215  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3786  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7311  
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0909  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3083  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0724  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000262

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: REGIME DETAINS AMERICAN CENTER STUDENTS

REF: RANGOON 184

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In an aggressive move against our American Center, the regime has detained several of our high-profile students and patrons. A prominent American Center student was detained at Yangon International Airport while departing Burma for the U.S. to participate in a State Department funded International Visitor's Program exchange. He has not yet been released and several other American Center students have been detained and questioned regarding American Center programs. The police have also raided the homes and businesses of other American Center patrons and pro-democracy activists. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On March 5, International Visitor (IV) Program participant Thwin Linn Aung was detained while departing Yangon International Airport en route to the United States to participate in an IV program on conflict resolution funded by the USG. Thwin Linn Aung is one of the our most prominent American Center students. He is president of the Myanmar Debate Society (300 members strong) and active in many of the Center's programs.

¶3. (SBU) On Saturday March 10, American Center student and 88 Generation Students spokesman Pan Daik Tun was detained by the regime and held the entire day for questioning. Pan Daik Tun told us the regime questioned him about the classes he was taking at the American Center as well as the student book club that he leads. Pan Deik Tun gave an interview to DVB after he was released stating the regime was harassing former political prisoners who are attempting to finish their education.

¶4. (C) On Friday, March 9, Police raided the home of 88 Generation Students activist and American Center patron Ant Bwe Kyaw. The 88 Generation activists had been warned in advance of the raid and removed several documents from Ant Bwe Kyaw's house. A laptop was left behind that the police tried to confiscate but Ant Bwe Kyaw talked them out of taking it. Ant Bwe Kyaw is 88 Generation's information technology guru. He is in charge of formatting and distributing statements and information for their campaigns. Just before his house was raided, police raided a computer

center owned by the daughter of General Aung San's brother, U Aung Than. U Aung Than supports political activists from the NLD and the 88 Generation Students. He has been giving them free computer lessons at the center, tailored to their needs.

U Aung Than is also one of the applicants for the Embassy's small grants program.

15. (C) On Sunday, March 11, American Center patron Aung Thant Zin Oo was detained at 1300, and released later in the day at 1900. He was questioned about IV recipient Thwin Linn Aung, the student book club, and American Center programs. Another American Center student involved in the student book club was also picked up today and another has gone into hiding. Additionally, American Center student and NLD member U Soe Win told us today that he had been questioned by Police Special Branch (SB) regarding Thwin Linn Aung.

16. (C) Pro-democracy activists have long used the American Center's library, guest speakers, and workshops to gain information about a variety of topics that the government tries to censor. They see it as a safe haven where they can associate freely and continue their educations that were interrupted by the regime. The American Center, as well as the British Council, has frequently been a focus of demeaning articles in the regime's mouthpiece daily, the New Light of Myanmar. In addition, the GOB has recently demarched Embassy officials twice regarding American Center materials and activities (reftel). The recent arrests and detentions likely represent increased regime efforts to disrupt American Center activities and harass those who participate in them.

17. (SBU) Suggested Press Guidance:

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Q: Can you confirm reports that Thwin Linn Aung was arrested as he was about to depart Burma on an exchange program?

A: We understand that he has been arrested and call for his immediate and unconditional release. The United States sends thousands of people from all over the world every year on exchange programs to our country. The programs introduce visitors to the United States and offer exposure to a wide range of opinions on international issues.

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